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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. AMAZIANE (Vice-President)	(Morocco)
later:	Mr. MROZIEWICZ (President)	(Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1992/63, E/1992/90, E/1992/99)

REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/86, E/1992/101)

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/76)

Mr. STIBRAVY (International Chamber of Commerce) said that the review of the functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit came at a time when increasing importance was being attached to the role of non-governmental organizations. The Unit provided an essential interface between the Organization and the non-governmental organization community, and the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/63) clearly demonstrated the deplorable imbalance between the Unit's workload and its resources. The International Chamber of Commerce therefore believed that the Council should support any efforts to remedy that situation.

As a world business organization with a strong and longstanding commitment to sustainable development which had made an important contribution both to the preparations for, and the conduct of, the Rio Conference, the International Chamber of Commerce looked forward to participating actively in the follow-up activities.

Ms. FRALEIGH (International Alliance of Women) said that the International Alliance was deeply concerned by the revelations contained in the Secretary-General's report. A number of important world conferences would be held during the next few years; as similar conferences had in the past, they would be considerably enriched by the participation of non-governmental organizations. It was therefore vital to ensure that the Unit had the necessary resources to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations.

Mr. DEEN (Inter-Press Service International Cooperative) said that as his organization had only recently attained category I consultative status with the Council, he was particularly concerned to learn that the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, which played such an essential role in facilitating the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the activities of the United Nations, was so seriously understaffed.

As the focal point for all non-governmental organizations in consultative status, the Unit was required to process a voluminous amount of information. Since his own organization was concerned with the dissemination of information, it set particularly high store by the Unit's function in that area and believed that the Unit should be equipped with the necessary capacities, including modern computer equipment, to maintain comprehensive information dossiers on all non-governmental organizations in consultative status.

Citing the numerous appeals in General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions to non-governmental organizations to play a more constructive and operational role in the work of the Organization, he called on Member States to make the necessary efforts to facilitate such participation and paid tribute to the dedicated efforts of the Unit, which had maintained an excellent quality of service despite its enormous workload.

Mr. HUSSAIN (Muslim World League) said that the Secretary-General's report, graphically demonstrated the dramatic increase in the workload of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit since its creation in 1948. His organization would support any efforts the Council might wish to make to revitalize the Unit and thereby enable non-governmental organizations to establish a more effective relationship with the United Nations. The importance of non-governmental organizations was widely recognized by the Organization and had been remarked on by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in his statement to the Council.

He commended the Unit on its unfailing helpfulness and responsiveness, despite the enormous strain under which it was forced to operate and stressed, once again, the need to increase its resources and staff.

Mr. HAMDANI (World Muslim Congress) said that his organization was particularly concerned by the adverse effects of the recent restructuring exercise on the functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit and, by extension, on the effectiveness of the non-governmental organizations themselves. While welcoming the Secretary-General's report, he noted that it had omitted one of the primary functions of the Unit, which was to service the non-governmental organizations by giving necessary guidance and familiarizing them with United Nations procedures and with the limitations under which they were required to operate. Whereas, in the past, he had always enjoyed free access to the Unit and had received copies of its reports, since the restructuring exercise, it had become increasingly difficult to maintain that close relationship; that had cast in doubt the advisability of maintaining non-governmental organization representatives at United Nations Headquarters.

The procedure for participation by non-governmental organizations in the Rio Conference had been far from satisfactory and he therefore stressed the need to draft and adopt rules governing the participation of non-governmental organizations in such conferences. Finally, he joined other speakers in expressing sincere appreciation to the Unit for the efficient and cordial service they had always provided.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/47/283-E/1992/83, A/47/288-E/1992/94, A/47/291-E/1992/95)

(a) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

(b) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

(c) DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATION

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said, with reference to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 46/176 on emergency assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia and 46/178 on emergency assistance to the Sudan and Operation Lifeline Sudan, that full reports on the situations in

(Mr. Eliasson)

Somalia and the Sudan would be submitted to the General Assembly, but that he wished to highlight significant developments in those areas and to draw the Council's attention to the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa and to the Updated Appeal.

After more than three years of violent conflict, Somalia was totally devastated; 4.5 million Somalis had been affected by the conflict with 2 million left homeless. An estimated 80 per cent of vital social services had been rendered non-operational and the absence of a national Government and administration had necessitated the de facto division of the country into regions for the purposes of the implementation of emergency assistance programmes.

Despite the highly volatile security situation - illustrated by attacks against United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers in violation of international and humanitarian law - which severely limited access to the affected population, thereby hampering an effective response to the crisis, determined efforts were being made to re-establish a United Nations presence in the country and implement the Secretary-General's 90-day plan of action for humanitarian assistance. A range of measures had been carried out to facilitate the delivery of food aid by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The Updated Appeal set emergency requirements to the end of 1992 at US$ 76 million, covering essential programmes dealing with refugees and returnees, emergency health care, water and sanitation, health and agriculture. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund called for by General Assembly resolution 46/182 was now operational. He commended the courage of all those involved in the emergency operations, who worked under the constant threat of injury or death, and welcomed the recent agreement on the deployment of 50 military observers in Mogadishu, pursuant to Security Council resolution 751 (1992), and hoped that agreement would also be reached on the deployment of a 500-member force to protect humanitarian assistance operations.

Since the last report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (A/46/452), he said that the precarious situation in that country had deteriorated further. Drought, floods, civil conflict and factional fighting had affected

(Mr. Eliasson)

large parts of the country and had resulted in continued population displacements both within the country and across national boundaries. Food security remained a critical problem and malnutrition and disease were widespread.

In early 1992, there had been 7.6 million people in need of assistance; six months later, that figure probably had increased by one million, and access to the affected populations had been limited owing to political and military developments. The problem of the urban poor and displaced in Khartoum remained a serious concern, as did the large-scale demolition of squatter areas and displacement camps in that city.

Although peace talks organized under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity had not resolved the civil conflict, an agreement had been reached to resume the negotiations later. In February the Government had introduced a package of economic reforms to strengthen the country's long-term capacity to cope with emergencies and embark on a path of recovery and development. Those efforts should receive the highest priority.

Contributions to the United Nations agencies in response to the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal amounted to approximately US$ 141 million, whereas emergency assistance requirements for the first six months had been estimated at approximately US$ 250 million. In addition to the overall shortfall, there were serious problems related to the late delivery of food aid and the imbalance between food and non-food aid contributions. On 15 July an updated Consolidated Appeal had been issued which estimated total requirements through the end of the year at approximately US$ 141 million.

Although consultations with the Government with respect to access and internally displaced persons looked promising, those remained serious problems. Most recently, the Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in the Sudan had presented to the Government and the opposing factions a comprehensive plan for emergency relief distribution in southern Sudan which incorporated the basic principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan and was intended to provide a basis for agreement.

(Mr. Eliasson)

Turning to the question of assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, he underscored the importance of a multisectoral approach involving most of the organizations in the United Nations system. Focusing on the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP on the issue, he said that a major component of UNDP's assistance to uprooted persons in Africa was its substantial support of the work of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Beginning in 1992, UNDP Special Programme Resources had been made available to resident representatives to initiate steps to mobilize and coordinate assistance to deal with new such situations. UNDP resident representatives also were in the forefront of the United Nations system-wide response to the emergency in southern Africa, which included efforts to prevent people from being forced to leave their homes to seek relief aid elsewhere.

While UNHCR would continue to play the lead role in fostering the voluntary and safe return of refugees, the medium and longer-term reintegration of such persons and of internally displaced persons would be a major priority for the United Nations development agencies. The expanded Inter-Agency Working Group on Refugees and Displaced Persons had recommended that UNDP should act as lead agency at the country level in developing the activities in which specific reintegrations should fit, and had called for a prompt definition of the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved.

UNHCR also remained committed to helping longer-term refugees in countries of asylum in Africa, as well as the host countries themselves. UNDP had committed all of the funds it had received following the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, and over 25 projects utilizing such funds were being implemented throughout the continent. UNDP also was continuing its efforts to ensure that the needs of such persons were taken into account in national development plans and by the donor community.

The people had shown outstanding resilience and ingenuity in coping with their desparate situations. National authorities, the international donor community and the United Nations system must continue to work together to confront the challenges that lay ahead.

Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs), introducing document A/47/291-E/1992/95 on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, said that the scope and volume of the relevant activities of the United Nations system had increased during the past year. The programme of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon (UNARDOL) which had been established in 1975, was now fully operational. The newly designated Resident Coordinator had been in Beirut since January and various United Nations programmes and specialized agencies had re-established or expanded their presence in the country. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the programmes and organizations of the United Nations system had sought to provide maximum support to the Government as it prepared and implemented reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and programmes. The entire United Nations system had extended full cooperation, and a strong and integrated United Nations programme was being developed.

Coordination at the field level was complemented by coordination at the central level, within the Department of Political Affairs. He had recently convened a meeting in New York with representatives of all United Nations programmes and agencies with activities in the country and such meetings would be held on a regular basis. He also remained in very close contact with the UNARDOL Resident Coordinator.

Lebanon was in urgent need of large-scale assistance to rebuild its infrastructure and economy, which had been shattered by 17 years of violent conflict. The Secretary-General was fully committed to mobilizing all the resources of the United Nations system to that end, an effort which required strong support from the donor community. Progress clearly had been made during the past year, although national security, a prerequisite for the creation of an economic and social environment conducive to reconstruction and development, as yet had remained elusive.

Mr. BOULERES (Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme) said that document A/47/283-E/1992/83 provided an overview of developments in Yemen since the unification of the country and of the steps undertaken by the United Nations, and by UNDP in particular, to

(Mr. Bouleres)

mobilize international assistance. Notwithstanding the difficulties described in paragraph 4, the Government had introduced economic reforms, established new population and employment policies and had adopted a new policy approach to environmental protection, all of which efforts deserved the support of the international community.

The first round-table conference for Yemen, held at Geneva on 30 June and 1 July 1992 had provided an opportunity for a constructive discussion of Yemen policies, problems and needs. The next such conference was scheduled for the second half of 1993; in the meantime a series of sectoral consultations would be held to coordinate the international response to the country's needs with respect to water, agriculture, human development, energy, infrastructure, environment and macroeconomic management. Many donor countries and organizations had already responded to the call for assistance.

Mr. PETERS (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that during the past year refugee crises in Africa had continued unabated. The impact of successive emergencies on millions of drought victims, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in the Horn of Africa, Angola, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique and the Sudan had been particularly severe. The effect of the drought in southern Africa was of particular concern and threatened the region's capacity to carry out reforms vital to longer-term development.

Despite that somber picture, the recent impetus towards peace and democracy in many parts of Africa had improved prospects for voluntary repatriation. UNHCR, together with the relevant national authorities, was preparing for or undertaking the repatriation of more than 1 million refugees throughout the continent. Countries of origin required assistance to reabsorb their nationals if large-scale repatriation was to be successful. UNHCR had called on all parties to cooperate in creating a safe and secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to refugees and returnees.

In West Africa, the situation had been marked by the continuing massive presence of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries and by the more recent exodus from Sierra Leone into Guinea and Liberia. Despite some recent progress in the search for peace in Liberia, the political and security

(Mr. Peters)

situation still precluded the organized voluntary repatriation of the 655,000 Liberian refugees outside their country, although since April some 30,000 persons had returned spontaneously. UNHCR had continued to provide humanitarian assistance to West African countries hosting Liberian refugees. As efforts to create conditions conducive to organized repatriation continued, UNHCR would continue to help build infrastructure and would pursue its efforts to sensitize the major parties to the requirements for a mass repatriation in safety and dignity, while stepping up its assistance to persons returning spontaneously and its related monitoring activities.

In the Horn of Africa, the situation was compounded by widespread insecurity and famine posing a major challenge. Throughout much of 1991, the security situation in Ethiopia had been a major obstacle to the effective delivery of assistance to refugees. A significant improvement since January 1992 had permitted deliveries of food to the 430,000 Somali refugees in the east. However, the deterioration of the security situation in Somalia had caused continuing influxes of new arrivals in Ethiopia. The agencies of the United Nations system were working together to provide assistance on a non-discriminatory basis to refugees, returnees, displaced persons and affected local populations. A joint mission involving UNHCR, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund had visited north-west Somalia in June to assess the possibility of restarting the returnee programme which had to be suspended, and the timing of such an initiative was under consideration. In making every possible effort to carry out its mandate in Somalia, UNHCR had maintained a cooperative working relationship with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

The situation in Somalia had been a major factor in precipitating the mass return of Ethiopian refugees to their country of origin, and efforts to disperse them to their places of origin had continued despite security constraints. Quick impact projects had been introduced to benefit returnees and local communities with improved services and enhance their productive capacity.

Some quarter of a million Sudanese refugees in western Ethiopia had spilled back into the Sudan in May 1991 and were receiving emergency

(Mr. Peters)

assistance through Operation Lifeline Sudan, which was supported by UNHCR. The repatriation of as many Eritrean refugees from the Sudan had been under discussion, but substantial organized repatriation was not likely to commence before the end of 1992; meanwhile, UNHCR was continuing to provide care and maintenance in the Sudan.

Djibouti, with a population of only half a million, had been host at the end of April 1992 to more than 100,000 refugees. Since that time, the Djibouti authorities had begun transferring some refugees to camps where UNHCR assistance was provided.

Kenya had been severely affected by events in the Horn of Africa. By June 1992, over 300,000 persons had been registered as refugees, and another 20,000 had fled to Kenya from the civil war in southern Sudan. Problems of security, accessibility and land availability had been important constraints on providing assistance to the refugees. Although UNHCR had been providing emergency assistance and the World Food Programme had been providing basic food, a continuing flow of new arrivals would pose serious logistical problems.

The peace accord between the Government of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) had paved the way for Africa's largest voluntary repatriation, of some 300,000 Angolan refugees, which was to commence during the second half of 1992. Spontaneous repatriations had been occurring since November 1991 and arrangements had been made to provide UNHCR assistance to those concerned; however, many land mines remained to be cleared prior to any large-scale repatriation.

The problem of Rwandese refugees, of whom about 500,000 were residing in five neighbouring countries, had been entrusted to the Organization of African Unity and UNHCR for solution; it was hoped that voluntary repatriation could begin during the second half of 1992.

Southern Africa was currently suffering one of the worst droughts in living memory, adding to the pressure on government resources, and further major population movements were expected from Mozambique into Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, whose aggregate refugee population already exceeded 1 million. In several asylum countries the continued presence of large refugee populations was creating antagonism and compassion fatigue.

(Mr. Peters)

It would become practically impossible for UNHCR to attend to the particular needs of refugees and returnees in the region unless the overall needs of the affected populations were addressed. UNHCR had been coordinating its response to the serious food deficits for refugees with the World Food Programme and with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. To avert major loss of life, however, the international community must step up its humanitarian efforts.

A number of difficulties had been encountered in recent months with the voluntary repatriation of South African refugees; political and economic conditions in South Africa and fear of harassment, intimidation, detention or arrest were causing some potential returnees to have second thoughts.

UNHCR had been steadily increasing the resources allocated to Africa, but those increases had been outstripped by increases in the number of refugees. In 1992, UNHCR would devote 40 per cent of its resources to programmes in Africa, which had some 30 per cent of the world's refugees. Lasting solutions to Africa's refugee problems called for a concerted approach by the United Nations system and the international community, since returnees would be going back to countries devastated by war and in need of comprehensive programmes for political, economic and social reconstruction.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that in the last decade the United Nations had been called upon to provide urgent and extensive assistance to populations afflicted by natural or man-made disasters, and many new emergency situations had emerged. The number of people affected by disasters was increasing, while the number of people living in poverty was also rising. It was more than ever essential to see humanitarian needs as a concern of the international community as a whole, and the United Nations must play a crucial and growing role in humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, both directly and as a catalyst for efforts by Governments and regional and non-governmental organizations.

Emergency assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and in ways that would be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Economic growth and sustainable development were essential and adequate resources must be made available to address the development problems of the developing countries.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that his delegation was gratified that the work initiated one year earlier had culminated in a General Assembly resolution establishing the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Its mandate had already evolved from an exclusive focus on emergency assistance coordination to include also the broader responsibilities of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, and early warning systems for emerging natural and man-made disasters, and it had begun to prove its worth through its leadership in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa.

One of the Department's most important tasks in the coming year would be to assist in the formulation of a humanitarian assistance plan specifying the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies in all aspects of humanitarian assistance within the continuum from relief to rehabilitation to development. The establishment of such a plan would be a critical step in enhancing emergency assistance coordination within the United Nations development system.

His delegation favoured the appointment by the Secretary-General of United Nations coordinators in each major country receiving assistance from the United Nations development system, and stressed the importance of further long-term and short-term secondments to the Department from all the specialized agencies operating in the field in order to ensure immediate access to the broadest possible range of expertise.

Mr. WANG Xinggen (China) said that natural and man-made disasters had in the past few years brought huge losses of life and property in various countries, necessitating special economic and disaster relief assistance. The international community was duty-bound to help people in disaster-stricken areas to resettle, restore production and reconstruct their homelands.

While the General Assembly had adopted resolutions, at its forty-sixth session, on humanitarian emergency assistance to a variety of countries, the international community's response fell far short of meeting the needs of the disaster-stricken areas; he hoped that countries that were in a position to do so, especially the industrialized countries, would provide more humanitarian assistance. China, itself a developing country prone to natural disasters - which in the last year had affected as many as 200 million people - had in

(Mr. Wang Xinggen, China)

that same year provided, within its capabilities, disaster relief assistance to the Sudan, Mozambique, Angola and others.

His delegation noted with pleasure that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) had played an important role in coordinating emergency relief operations, providing $207 million worth of assistance to disaster-stricken areas in the 1990-1991 biennium, 15 times as much as during the 1986-1987 biennium. Not only did UNDRO quickly alert the international community to disasters, it also lost no time in mobilizing emergency assistance.

His delegation hoped that the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs would make the best use of limited resources, taking into account the needs and the development plans of the affected countries. However, humanitarian assistance should be given in full respect for the sovereignty of the recipient country and no preconditions should be attached; otherwise, humanitarian assistance would be deprived of its intrinsic meaning.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that at its last session, the General Assembly had, through a hard-won consensus resolution, created a new set of instruments for United Nations response to humanitarian emergencies, including the position of humanitarian emergency assistance coordinator. Although the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been in existence for little more than six months, it had already made some notable achievements. In late May 1992, the central emergency revolving fund had reached its target of $50 million, which allowed it to become operational, and was being put to immediate use for relief activity in the Horn of Africa.

Nearly $600 million in pledges had been raised for victims of the drought in southern Africa, illustrating how, if efforts were coordinated effectively, as was being done by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the international community could respond decisively to emergency situations. As a result, there was a prospect of the concept of a continuum from humanitarian emergency relief through rehabilitation, to sustainable economic growth becoming a reality.

The distribution of relief supplies in southern Africa would depend greatly on South Africa's cooperation; so far that cooperation had been

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

forthcoming. Moreover, the parties to the talks in Rome over Mozambique's future had reached agreement on the establishment of corridors of tranquillity for the channelling of relief supplies into that country. The negotiation of such corridors of peace could lead to more than the delivery of relief supplies; humanitarian activities could be a critical factor in limiting or controlling violence and could make a positive contribution to the resolution of conflicts.

In Somalia, progress was being made on humanitarian relief efforts, with the delivery of food and with agreement being reached to send 50 United Nations observers.

Since his appointment, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had had to face a number of serious challenges, not just in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, but also in the border areas of Bangladesh and Myanmar, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iraq. The return to Myanmar from Bangladesh of the Rohingya refugees could be satisfactorily carried out only if the United Nations had a presence in Myanmar, and he urged that country to accept such a presence. Australia was hopeful that concerted United Nations and international action could restore peace and order to Bosnia and Herzegovina and fully supported the continuing United Nations programme of humanitarian assistance to that country.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) welcomed the establishment of the central emergency revolving fund. In view of the growing gap between need for emergency relief and available resources, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would continue to serve as a catalyst for efforts by Governments, donors and others. His delegation also welcomed the pledge by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the guiding principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 would be adhered to, and expressed appreciation for the efforts to repatriate the Myanmar refugees living in Bangladesh. Since emergency assistance was not an end in itself, the root causes of emergency situations needed to be addressed. He fully shared the view that the United Nations early warning system would be a valuable instrument for preventive action. Adequate disaster preparedness should receive high priority since it could greatly reduce the effects of disasters.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

The United Nations must provide the linkage between humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and long-term development. Particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups, which were the first victims of any disaster. The linkage between immediate disaster relief, rehabilitation and long-term development was essential to bring about lasting solutions. Coordination of disaster relief assistance was important both to ensure effectiveness and to alleviate human suffering. The capacity of Governments to cope with disasters should be enhanced. The resident coordinators could play a very useful role at the country level in that regard and their role should be further strengthened.

Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in emergencies and disaster relief during 1991-1992 had been guided not only by the crisis situations that it had addressed, but also by changes in the working arrangements in the United Nations system for coping with emergency situations. Of major importance were the Organization's responses to the droughts in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa. The FAO global information and early warning system continued to monitor crop and food supply conditions throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries that were most vulnerable to food shortages and disasters and where emergency situations might arise. It had also sent crop and food supply assessment missions to Tanzania, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Laos, Kenya and the southern Africa subregion. Several of those missions had been carried out jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP), whereby FAO was responsible for assessing overall needs and WFP for evaluating the requirements of target beneficiary groups and logistic aspects. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) had also collaborated with FAO missions and its findings had provided the basis for a series of special warnings and reports. FAO had participated in United Nations inter-agency needs assessment missions to Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola and had contributed to the consolidated United Nations appeal for international emergency humanitarian relief for those three countries.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

Through its Office for Special Relief Operations, FAO was providing support to emergency and rehabilitation projects in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Cambodia, Bangladesh and the Philippines. In Latin America, emergency assistance had been provided for agricultural rehabilitation projects in Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua.

FAO was pleased to note that the response to the appeal on behalf of the drought-affected countries of southern Africa had been positive. FAO collaboration with the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) had started well. It had participated in the preparation of the various United Nations appeals coordinated by DHA, providing an assessment of the crop and food supply situation and proposals for agricultural emergency rehabilitation programmes. FAO was also participating in the various inter-agency mechanisms being put in place by the Department. The latter had already demonstrated its effectiveness as an instrument for coordinating and mobilizing international emergency assistance. He was pleased to note that the FAO mandate for assessing food needs and agricultural rehabilitation requirements was being fully respected and its ability to assist in those areas effectively utilized.

Mr. MONTERO (Chile) stressed the need to strengthen practical disaster relief measures within the global strategies aimed at reversing the consequences of natural disasters. Chile supported the important work carried out by the United Nations in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance and felt that General Assembly resolution 46/182 provided an appropriate framework for enhancing system-wide coordination in that regard. His delegation fully supported the guiding principles set forth in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the annex to the resolution.

It was gratifying to learn that the goal of $50 million had been achieved for the central emergency revolving fund and that those resources would be used speedily and effectively in emergency situations. Those funds should be transferred only under exceptional circumstances and should be used to meet urgent needs. The Organization's role in the field of disaster prevention and mitigation was very important. The establishment of the new humanitarian relief structures would strengthen prevention and early warning measures. The

(Mr. Montero, Chile)

Organization could promote a greater exchange and dissemination of technical information for evaluating, anticipating and mitigating disasters. Economic growth and sustainable development were essential to enable States to cope better with natural disasters and other emergencies. The guiding principles to that effect set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 were fundamental in that regard.

His delegation reaffirmed the basic role of the United Nations system as an essential instrument for promoting international cooperation for development and stressed that its work should focus in particular on the areas which impeded development. States that were prone to natural disasters must strengthen their national preparedness structures to be better able to cope with such emergencies. The affected country must determine the magnitude of a natural disaster and the need for international assistance, and donor States and international organizations should provide only the type of aid requested. Efforts should be made to provide international assistance within 24 hours. The signing of immediate-aid agreements with neighbouring countries would facilitate speedy rescue and relief efforts. Lastly, donor countries should consider sending financial resources for acquiring equipment corresponding to the specific nature of each disaster situation.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that the reform of the system-wide response to humanitarian emergencies was very much a part of the Organization's ongoing efforts to revitalize the system and make it more dynamic by assigning greater priority to and ensuring improved coordination of economic and social policy and programmes of the United Nations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been established as a central coordinating body with the mandate to maximize the speed and efficiency of the international community's response to natural and man-made disasters. He agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the Department should be a coordinating, rather than operational, body, and that it should be called upon to operate in complex emergencies involving political aspects as well as humanitarian assistance. However, if it overextends itself, it would risk failure.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

It was imperative that humanitarian relief be provided in a manner consistent with the long-term development needs of the affected country and that it be managed so as to mitigate the possibilities of recurrence.

The Department was proceeding along the right track and required continued cooperation from Member States and the agencies of the United Nations system to address the significant challenges which lay ahead. The Department was engaged in an unprecedented effort to coordinate its work between New York and Geneva. The Director of the Geneva office, besides facing the fundamental task of building a fully equipped, qualified staff, must ensure that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was fully utilized and must determine the most effective role for the UNDRO elements of the Geneva office. In view of the Department's very broad mandate, it was necessary to define more clearly how the agencies of the United Nations system supported its efforts. A special challenge in coordinating the United Nations reaction to humanitarian emergencies lay in determining how the agencies allocated their efforts to provide relief to the internally displaced, who should not necessarily be the responsibility of only one sectoral agency. It was also important to consider how to make the best use of resident coordinators.

He welcomed the commendable efforts by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to establish better monitoring and reporting on United Nations humanitarian activities, in order to keep donors well informed on the progress of its efforts, the financing of consolidated appeals and the progress towards long-range goals.

In view of the growing links between the provision of humanitarian relief and political and security issues, he stressed the need for those once distinct realms to be addressed together. Humanitarian diplomacy, in the form of relief supplies, corridors of peace and zones of tranquillity, could have a catalytic effect on the settlement of political issues directly related to human emergencies. No political settlement would be possible in Somalia or the Sudan without an adequate food supply. The new Department would therefore have to develop efficient channels for cooperation with other departments, to ensure that humanitarian relief efforts benefited from, and contributed to, the reduction of underlying political disputes.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

The recent appeal for drought victims in southern Africa had raised pledges in excess of US$ 600 million and could be counted a major success. The United States response to that appeal of US$ 359 million, added to its contribution to the central emergency revolving fund, reflected its commitment to the reform efforts which had resulted in the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

The massive problems in the Horn of Africa convincingly demonstrated the need for continued efforts to improve the United Nations ability to respond to complex and prolonged emergencies. It was essential for the Organization, with the help of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to coordinate its activities to remove all humanitarian and political obstacles to stability and development in those countries and he therefore called upon the entire donor community to give its full support to the efforts by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to improve coordination of the United Nations humanitarian relief effort in response to the needs of Somalia.

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) would give careful consideration to the various comments made during the debate. It intended to cooperate very closely with the representatives of Member States and the specialized agencies in dealing with the emergency situations that had arisen after the end of the cold war. A balance must be struck between the principle of sovereignty of States and the principle of access to humanitarian assistance. The United Nations had an opportunity to develop a new area of activities both with regard to preventive action and in the economic and social fields. If emergency relief was seen as one end of a continuum leading to rehabilitation and development, that would send a strong message of hope to people in distress and donors in the industrialized world.

The Department would be guided by the principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The key issues of the sovereignty and responsibility of Governments were the basis for "humanitarian diplomacy", aimed at reaching people in distress. He hoped that the central emergency revolving fund could be used dynamically and effectively and that resources

(Mr. Eliasson)

could be renewed through consolidated appeals. It was gratifying to note the positive comments made with regard to inter-agency work. In that connection, he sought to promote a "culture of cooperation" with the operational agencies. The mechanism of consolidated appeals was working very well. There had been a positive response to the southern African appeal and he hoped that a similar response would be given to the Horn of Africa appeal. The Department would work hard to enhance the early warning and rapid response system and would deal with the mine-clearance problems on a number of levels. It would also pursue the crucial work of assisting the growing number of refugees and displaced persons in the world.

It was shocking to note the increasing number of deliberate attacks against not only civilians but also United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers. It was essential to react very strongly and halt that dangerous trend. Member States must uphold the values set forth in the Charter. If that trend was stopped, the conditions for mobilizing resources would be drastically improved. If the security situation improved in Somalia, the international community had the obligation to make a massive humanitarian effort in that country. With regard to the situation in Iraq, the negotiations on a memorandum of understanding were continuing, while security and financial problems increased. The need to finance the humanitarian programme in Iraq was a matter of urgent concern. The Department was prepared to continue its efforts to solve the refugee problem in Myanmar and Bangladesh and he hoped that the parties concerned would take advantage of United Nations services in that regard. Lastly, he was gratified to note the expressions of support for the work of the Department and urged Member States to give positive consideration to the funding of its personnel, which was still conducted on an extrabudgetary basis. The United Nations must be given the resources to meet the new challenges that had arisen. The Organization was an expression of the collective will of its Member States to meet the daunting tasks facing it.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.